

## ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE USE

*(The following is excerpted from a Position Statement on Use of Alternative Medicine from the National Association of School Nurses)*

Alternative and complementary medicine includes products or practices not currently used, accepted or available in conventional medicine. Alternative medicine is any practice that is available to the public but not integrated into standard medical practice. Complementary medicine implies that the practice could be applied along with conventional medical care. Herbals (also called botanicals, dietary or nutritional supplements) are products that can be purchased without a prescription (over-the-counter). These products have been unregulated by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) until recently. Current regulations apply only to product label information.

Currently there are no standardized dosing guidelines, particularly for children's safe use of herbal products. Consumers may believe that a product marketed as "all natural" or "not a drug" is a treatment with no risk of side effects or less costly than a prescription drug. Health care professionals should not administer to children any substance for which safety is not established. At present, herbal products are not fully regulated and may not be sold unless the FDA can prove there is a danger.

Parents may request that school staff administer herbs and other alternative medicines (with or without a physician's statement): 1) in accordance with the school's policy on over-the-counter medicines, or 2) apart from the policy by suggesting that the product is a food and not subject to any restriction. The National Association of School Nurses recommends that school districts have written policies and procedures that focus on student safety and are consistent with state laws, state nursing practice standards, established safe practices, and scientific information.

Requests to administer or permit a student to carry a substance for relief of a condition or symptom or prevention of a health-related concern should be regarded as a medication request. The position of the National Association of School Nurses is that school policies should not permit students to carry nor permit a school nurse or other staff to administer any product that could be considered a drug, including "natural remedies," herbs, vitamins, dietary supplements, homeopathic medicines, or medications from other countries, without the following:

1. A written order from a health care provider authorized to prescribe that includes the condition for which the product is being used
2. A written request from the parent/legal guardian
3. Verification that the product and requested dosage are safe for the student (considering age, body weight, and condition)
4. Reasonable information about therapeutic and untoward effects and interactions

Policies regarding administration or carrying of any medication or product should be applied consistently with all students. Policies should not prohibit parents/legal guardians from administering the product at school themselves. <sup>(12)</sup>